

George's Story

George (Russ) lives with his 70 yr old mother and his stepfather. He is a young at heart 54 yr. Old man. He loves music and knows all the words to all the oldies. He enjoys singing dancing and is especially proud of his work at the ARC of Meriden /Wallingford. Most days after work he goes to his room and the house is full of music from the 70's and 80's. He rocks the house with his microphone and karaoke machine. In his mind his talents mimic those of Michael Jackson's. Other times he takes a power nap. George loves to be active however because of his current living situation his social activities are limited. He cannot read, write, tell time, count money, tell you his address or phone number, where he was born or distinguish relationships. He is a trusting and kind soul who has been taken advantage of in the past. He has minimal safety awareness and cannot be left alone for long periods of time. He is unable to shave independently and in the past he has scarred his face. He needs to be monitored for cuts, bite or abrasions or he will pick and scratch wounds until they become infected. He depends on his mother for his food, shelter, health care, recreation and necessary paperwork to maintain his current Medicaid benefits. He cannot prepare a meals but instead would eat all of his groceries or give all his money away. He is generous and whenever he hears somebody needs something he will tell them "don't worry I will buy it for you". That includes anything from a candy bar to a house Without all these supports George would not be able to live on his own nor would he have a day program. A program that gives him a reason to get up each day and a feeling of self worth.

Since going to respite in Hamden he has become more anxious to move and live with a group of peers. Staff at the respite center have made it so comfortable and enjoyable for him that he wants more than ever to live away from home. We both worry what will happen to George if I were to pass. Since he is so attached to me he thinks I will live forever so if I were to die and he was removed from the home he would be devastated. If a transition to a home took place while I was still here to help, it would be smooth and not stressful for George. He has been a priority 1 on the waiting list for 10 years. A list with no funding. It is Connecticut's moral obligation to provide for these individuals who cannot provide for themselves and who depend on others to be their voice.

Recently DDS programs and budgets have taken the large cuts. Please do not cut DDS funds any further but increase it for residential services ASAP our families can't wait. I can't wait and George can't wait. I ask that you overwhelmingly pass HB5534 and join us in being a voice for this vulnerable population. It is the right thing to do.

Thank you for your time and your attention to this matter,

Joanne Ouellette/George Johnson

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